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INTELLIGENCE STUDY

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INFLUENCES ON THE
VENEZUELAN COMMUNIST PARTY, 1958 - MID-1965

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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FOREWORD

Foreign and Domestic Influences on the Venezuelan Communist Party, 1958 - mid-1965 is the first in OCI's series of Intelligence Studies to deal with a free world Communist party. OCI Intelligence Studies are aimed at situations where study and analysis in some depth seems likely to clarify the nature of long-standing US security problems, to give timely warning about an emerging problem, or to assist the policy maker in considering ways of coping with any such problems. These research papers appear on no definite schedule but rather as a suitable subject happens to coincide with the availability of the special manpower resources required.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To study the past seven and a half years of the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV) is to examine one of the largest and most influential Communist parties in Latin America during a critical period in the history of both the party and the country. To study the PCV

is also to cast new light on the larger question of the position of free world Communist parties in relation to the Sino-Soviet dispute. In the case of the PCV, at least, the evidence seems quite clear that the party's course during these years was determined far more by domestic events and by efforts to seize local political opportunities and exploit the prestige of Fidel Castro than by any external direction.

During nearly all this time, the central issue of party policy was the armed struggle (lucha armada) vs. political maneuvering (via pacifica) as the approved strategy for achieving power. Throughout 1958 the party generally followed the "national front" tactic, exploiting the widespread public acceptance it enjoyed for its help in overthrowing the Perez Jimenez dictatorship in January of that year. After the Communists were eliminated from the coalition government, the PCV drifted toward the lucha armada strategy, at first with the main emphasis on urban terrorism, but after late 1963 on guerrilla warfare and the concept of a "prolonged struggle" in the countryside. Arrests of many of the top party leaders from 1962 on increased the influence of younger "hard-liners." The PCV sustained heavy losses from its resort to violence, however, and as of mid-1965 it seemed to be moving toward its earlier strategy by again placing greater effort on overt political programs, though without abandoning the primacy of the armed struggle. The party has, indeed, engaged in both legal and subversive activities in various forms throughout all phases of the cycle.

For its revolutionary theory, the PCV appears to have relied heavily on the doctrine and experience of a number of foreign Communist parties and leftist movements. The Cuban example clearly dominates all other pieces in this patchwork of borrowings, and

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was probably the essential inspiration. Since the missile crisis of 1962 and the decline of Castro's popularity in the hemisphere, however, the PCV has attempted to demonstrate to the Venezuelan public and to its fraternal parties that its revolutionary program is nationalistic, spontaneous, and unique--not a carbon copy of Cuba's or any other country's. It seeks to prove that its "national liberation" is a special contribution to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Despite the camouflage of theoretical jargon, it is clear that the PCV in the period 1958-65 has been guided primarily by pragmatic considerations.

The Sino-Soviet dispute did not perceptibly alter the path the PCV had chosen to follow, but it introduced embarrassing complications for the party. The controversy threatened to widen the differences between soft-liners and hard-liners in the party and in the Marxist Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), its close ally. The danger to unity was so great that the PCV eventually felt forced, despite a continuing sympathy with the USSR, to stand as a neutral between the two disputants. This was a neutrality not easily justified to many PCV members, not easily understood in Moscow, and often interpreted by other free world Communist parties--and perhaps in Peking--as leaning toward the Chinese. This refusal to line up with either side, despite its embarrassments, helped the PCV to hold itself and its alliance together.

The future course of the PCV in either the domestic or the foreign sphere cannot be predicted with accuracy. There is deep dissension in the party as a result of the years of armed struggle and the recent plans to renew emphasis on legal political activity; the young "hard-line" leaders of both the PCV and its MIR ally are not effectively controlled by the Communist hierarchy. If Moscow and Peking become formal competitors for authority in the world Communist movement, and if the PCV decides to abandon the armed struggle, there is bound to be a radical reshuffling of loyalties, leaders, and members in Communist and pro-Communist parties in Venezuela. Under these conditions, Peking will probably not lack an organized following in the country. In any

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event, Moscow, though still the PCV's primary source of guidance and aid, can probably no longer rely on the party's automatic obedience when PCV leaders consider that their immediate interests indicate non-compliance.

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I. THE VENEZUELAN COMMUNIST PARTY IN NATIONAL POLITICS

This study is designed to identify and evaluate the intricate domestic and foreign influences which came to bear on the Venezuelan Communist Party (PCV), its programs, and its leaders during the period from the fall of the Perez Jimenez' rightist dictatorship in January 1958 to about mid-1965. The major emphasis is on the PCV's estimates of its opportunities at critical junctures in the domestic political scene, divisions among its leaders and collaborators, and the impact of Castroism and the Sino-Soviet dispute on the party's decisions.

The PCV program for these years divides into two general phases. During the first, from 1958 to early 1962, the party placed primary stress on the use of overt, legal, political action, variously defined in Communist parlance as the "mass struggle," via pacifica, or via parlamentaria. During the second phase, which is still in progress but showing some signs of decline, the party resorted to the armed struggle (lucha armada), which the Venezuelan Communists usually describe as the "superior" method of seeking power. The first phase merged only gradually into the second, and during this twilight period, it was indeed difficult to determine whether the PCV was placing greater emphasis on mass or armed struggle.

Furthermore, in neither of the two phases did the party absolutely reject tactics characteristic of the other. During the period of legal political action, "hard-line" leaders were actively planning revolutionary activities; during the period of violent action "soft-line" leaders were advocating and employing various legal or mass activities. Within each of the two basic strategies, moreover, the PCV adopted various modifications in both theory and practice in accordance with its own appraisal of party prospects. Generally speaking, the dominance of each phase seems to have been closely related to the nature of the opportunities which the PCV saw in current political developments.

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The Two Phases of the PCV's Program

The PCV reached the climax of its power and influence during the first two years after the overthrow of Perez Jimenez in January 1958. The party was then the largest in Latin America in relation to national population and ranked third (after Argentina and Brazil) in total estimated membership.

Several conditions worked in favor of the PCV during the early post-dictatorship era and contributed immeasurably to the party's extensive political assets. First, there was a protracted public reaction against governmental authority as an aftermath to many years of strong-arm rule. The political climate, especially in Caracas, was volatile and the environment offered wide leeway for Communist maneuvers and agitation. The discredited security forces of Perez Jimenez had been dismantled in toto and the reorganized police were ill trained and poorly equipped, intimidated by mob action, and had only limited capabilities for maintaining law and order.

The provisional junta (January 1958 - February 1959), which was headed by Admiral Wolfgang Larrazabal during most of the term, restored the PCV's legal status and followed a policy toward Communism which ranged from complacency to outright sympathy. Larrazabal took no action while in office to control Communist activities, even after the PCV exploited the demonstrations against Vice President Nixon at the time of his official visit to Venezuela in the spring of 1958. The PCV's nomination of Larrazabal as its presidential candidate was a measure of Communist endorsement and appreciation of the junta's policy toward the party.

From any standpoint, the PCV could scarcely have asked for a more favorable political ambiance than the one which prevailed in the months after the downfall of Perez Jimenez. All the major parties--the Democratic Action (AD), Democratic Republican Union (URD), and COPEI, a Christian Democratic party--were leftist in orientation. The AD and URD had programs with a strong Marxist seasoning, and factions within their ranks were avowedly Marxist; the URD in particular had close ties with the PCV. Even the anti-Communist COPEI found little distinction between the

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"evils" of capitalism and Communism. Conservative and moderate groupings were discredited and unable to exert any countervailing force on the left.

In addition, the PCV had gained widespread public recognition--and concomitant respectability and acceptance--for its contribution to the civilian movement which helped overthrow the dictator. The national Patriotic Junta, which had directed the activity of the clandestine civilian organization against the Perez dictatorship, included representatives of the AD, URD, COPEI, and PCV, and was in effect a ready-made "united front" which the Communists exploited effectively. The Communists also played a vociferous role in the counterpart united front for organized labor, which was established in 1958, and were represented on the national electoral board.

To take advantage of the favorable political conditions, the PCV either had, or developed rapidly, a number of specific assets. The PCV had a strong position in student, educational, and other intellectual circles (journalists, artists, and professional groups) and a labor following which was second only to AD among all Venezuelan parties. It had an almost unlimited access to public information media which enabled the party to publicize and magnify disproportionately its "patriotic service" against the dictatorship and its defense of the provisional regime against the rightist military and other "reactionaries." When the junta faced military threats in July and September 1958, for example, the PCV ostentatiously sounded the alarm and posed as the principal defender of democracy. Communist influence in information media also served to nourish the pronounced anti-US sentiment which came to the surface after Perez' overthrow.

The only major setback to the PCV and its bright prospects along the via pacifica, the legal path to power, was the collapse of the concept of a united political front with Communist participation. This came when the three major parties, realizing the problems in US relations that would be caused by their continuing alliance with the Communists, signed the

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Punto Fijo Pact in October 1958. This agreement was designed to establish a common, "minimum" governmental program and a coalition regime regardless of the outcome of the presidential election. The Communists were expressly excluded from the agreement and ipso facto from the future coalition, at least at the cabinet level.

Nevertheless, the PCV could find comfort in the results of the national elections a few weeks later. Polling the highest percentage (6.2 percent) of the total vote in its 27-year history, the party won nine seats in the Congress, four positions in the municipal council of Caracas--focal point of political life--and some positions in other municipal councils and in state legislatures. There was good reason to believe that the party could retain the large number of positions at the middle and lower levels of government which its members and sympathizers reportedly held in the ministries of labor and education, in the public universities, and in the school system. Moreover, under Venezuela's emerging multiparty system, the PCV had a great deal of bargaining power because of its close ties with the important URD party; an estimated membership of 30,000 to 35,000; an estimated additional 125,000 sympathizers; the best disciplined political organization in the country; and strong influence over volatile student groups at Central University. Significantly, this strength was concentrated largely in the capital where the strongest national party--AD--was weakest.

By January 1959, when the Castro regime came to power in Cuba and when Communist China was beginning to take a greater interest in Latin American parties, the PCV's outlook pointed clearly along the via pacifica as the only logical and practical means to pursue its objectives. Probably no other party in the hemisphere, except the Chilean, had better prospects for infiltrating government and political groups and wielding a substantial influence on national policies.

During the first four central committee plenums convened after the overthrow of Perez Jimenez--the last of which was held in January 1959 just prior to a visit by Fidel Castro to Caracas--the party decided unconditionally on a policy of mass or legal

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action. This policy sought to retain united political and labor fronts and prolong the favorable atmosphere which prevailed under the provisional government. Even after the PCV's exclusion from the government coalition under the Punto Fijo Pact and the defeat of its presidential candidate by the AD's Romulo Betancourt in the election of December 1958, the central committee confirmed (in the plenum of January 1959) that the party's priority tasks were the "broadening of the national coalition"--that is, to include the Communists--and the maintenance of cordial relations with all major political groups.

It is true that during this same period the PCV decided to retain and streamline its clandestine apparatus and to develop a paramilitary force for capabilities for carrying out both urban terrorism and guerrilla warfare. The primary mission of the covert organizations at this time, however, was to defend in prospective alliance with other civilian groups against a possible rightist coup attempt and to conduct clandestine party functions in the event such a coup were successful and the PCV again outlawed. The secondary objective was "to support the PCV in its struggle for power." By January 1959, Douglas Bravo, at present one of the ranking guerrilla commanders, was relieved of other party duties to assume full-time organizational and training responsibilities for the paramilitary force, which initially numbered about 200 to 300. The party applied tight internal security regulations to this aspect of its program, apparently limiting knowledge of subversive



DOUGLAS BRAVO

Member of PCV and, as of May 1965, of the military commission coordinating PCV and guerrilla activities. Figure 1.

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POMPEYO MARQUEZ

PCV member since 1939, central committee member since 1946, one of three principal Communist leaders until arrest in 1964. Figure 2.

activity to only a few top party leaders and others directly involved.

The recourse to clandestine methods was not a departure from Venezuelan Communist tradition but rather a continuation of the underground activities directed by Pompeyo Marquez, a PCV national secretary, after the party was outlawed by Perez Jimenez in 1950. In early 1959, the party had no serious intention of risking its sizable assets for legal political activity by resorting to the "national liberation struggle" against the Betan-

court government, which was inaugurated in February of that year. The interest in developing guerrilla warfare capabilities was, however, an innovation and the timing suggested the influence of the Castro revolution.

Castro's Impact on Venezuelan Politics

The Cuban Revolution had a deep and lasting impact on Venezuelan politics and particularly on the PCV, its programs and its collaborators. In fact, the Cuban upheaval and the aftermath became so entangled in Venezuelan domestic developments after 1959 that they cannot be categorized as strictly foreign influences. As will be seen in a later section, the Castro regime had firsthand contacts with PCV leaders and gave support in various forms to the Venezuelan subversive groups. Beyond this, however, the Cuban example exerted a potent indirect effect on PCV developments by influencing the whole political climate in Venezuela and, as various PCV leaders saw it, providing them with local opportunities to exploit.

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Probably no other country in Latin America displayed such widespread public delirium over Castro's victory as Venezuela. This sentiment dissipated only gradually and has left permanent effects on national politics. The PCV evaluated the early reaction and decided to exploit it to the maximum, as did most Communist parties in the hemisphere. The first of Castro's two visits to Latin American capitals was significantly to Caracas, and was scheduled almost immediately after he made his triumphal entry into Havana in early 1959. His public appearances and provocative revolutionary speeches aroused frenzied mass adulation and approval in Venezuela, portending some of the serious unrest which was to be connected with the "Cuban issue."

In the months which followed, many Venezuelan political groups (or factions within them) seized upon the Castro regime and unconditionally supported it as a device for building popular support. In addition to the heroism and radicalism which Castro seemed to symbolize, Cuba's increasingly vindictive policy toward the United States also appealed to Venezuelans. The extensive anti-US sentiment traditional to Venezuela had been pent up during the years of Perez Jimenez' rule and the pressure raised to a highly explosive level by the alleged overly "cordial" attitude shown by the United States to the dictatorship. Individual political leaders converted themselves to the worship of Fidelismo and gave public homage to his style of reforms and US-baiting. By the end of 1960 frequent mass demonstrations around some aspect of Castroism had been held in Venezuela and these usually erupted into violence on a large scale. Such ferment in itself tended to sway the radical opposition toward emulation of the successful revolutionary example which Castro had established.

In 1960, two major political events closely linked to Castroism influenced the PCV toward the use of violence and the strategy of "national liberation" via the armed struggle. The more important of these was the expulsion in April of the Marxist wing from the AD party, the principal member of the ruling coalition. This faction subsequently

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reorganized in July as the Leftist Revolutionary Party (MIR) with the full cooperation of the Communists and the blessing of at least the radical elements of the URD.

From the outset the MIR was the principal collaborator of the PCV and it has been the chief Communist ally in the armed struggle launched in early 1962. Partly because the MIR was an offshoot of the "respectable" AD, the Communists viewed it as an excellent platform for launching a "united opposition front" to President Betancourt's regime, which was displaying considerable reserve if not animosity toward Castro. The MIR had a sizable following in Congress (one senator and 15 congressmen) and there was reason to believe that it could drain away substantial popular support from the AD, a traditional competitor of the PCV.

Although the MIR espoused Marxist principles and their application to Venezuela, it was above all fervently devoted to Castroism and the Cuban revolution. If some Miristas in recent months have been sobered by imprisonment and now favor a return to legal action, the leaders and rank and file during the party's first three years were almost uniformly advocates of the immediate application of Castro-type revolutionary methods. Moreover, since its founding, the MIR has exerted constant pressure on the PCV to move toward "the revolution" and Mirista leaders and student elements have often dragged the Communists into violence which the MIR elements had instigated. At a later period, the PCV was to accuse the MIR of trying to be more Marxist-Leninist, more radical, more revolutionary, and more Communist in general than the orthodox Communists.

The second development in 1960 which stimulated the PCV to consider a more radical program was the withdrawal of the URD from the coalition which, in Communist eyes, reduced the strength of the "oligarchical, pro-imperialist" government to a weakened AD and the COPEI. Conversely, this event had the effect of augmenting sharply the strength of the Communist-backed, pro-Castro opposition. The URD

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cooperated with the PCV on various issues since the 1940s and its domestic program at that time coincided with that of the PCV in many fundamental aspects, such as eventual nationalization of the private petroleum industry and antipathy toward private foreign investments. Moreover, the URD political recipe called for a large ingredient of anti-US propaganda. The party's foreign policy objectives otherwise could scarcely be distinguished from the Communists' in 1960: Urdis-tas were first of all outspoken champions of Castroism and favored establishment of diplomatic relations "with all countries"--viz., the Soviet bloc nations.

The URD's strong support of Cuba was the major reason for the party's withdrawal from the government in November 1960, although the pretext was the coalition's firm handling of Castroite violence in October and November of that year. Foreign Minister Ignacio Luis Arcaya, top URD leader in the coalition, had violated his instructions at the meeting of Inter-American Foreign Ministers at San José in August by refusing to vote in favor of the resolution condemning international Communist intervention in the hemisphere (that is, in Cuba). He resigned shortly thereafter, signaling the URD's decision to exchange its influence and patronage within the regime for Castroism. A strong faction within the URD was led by one-time Communists, Communist sympathizers, and Castroites who were beginning to push the party toward radicalism. They were already cooperating with the PCV and MIR in violent tactics by the end of 1960.

The PCV thus found itself blessed with close collaborators by the end of the year in contrast to its relative isolation after the Punto Fijo Pact of late 1958. The Communists were heavily indebted to the Castro regime for these political bonanzas.

The Third Congress of the PCV in March 1961, the first such "supreme" party gathering since the late 1940s, marked a critical juncture along the

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GUSTAVO MACHADO

One of founders of PCV in 1931, important member until arrest in 1963; followed lead of CPSU.

Figure 3.

road to violence. The meeting pointed up the mounting pressure from at least a strong minority of the middle and lower level leaders for the "revolutionary" line, but Gustavo Machado, a national secretary representing the more cautious, old guard leadership, gave the key speech which served to moderate the final decisions. He pointed out that conditions were not ripe for the overthrow of President Betancourt by force, as demonstrated by party experience to that point; that conditions suggested the formation of a "democratic patriotic front" rather

than a "national liberation (revolutionary) front." The politburo's reported warning to the congress to avoid imprudent action was provoked by the clamor of some delegates for an explanation of why the PCV was not "going forward in the path of Castro."

The principal resolution of the congress ambiguously called for the "overthrow of the policies of President Betancourt," rather than his ouster by force. The fuzzy wording was designed, on the one hand, to appease the elements of the party and its MIR and URD collaborators favoring the lucha armada; and, on the other, to keep the party within the limits of legality and thus avoid stronger governmental suppression. Representatives of the URD and MIR who were present at the sessions appealed for "continuing unity of the leftists." The tactic of "overthrowing the policies" of the incumbent regime proved sufficiently flexible to serve the purposes of the hard-liners--the advocates of armed struggle--who subsequently claimed that they were following faithfully the dictates of the Third Congress, theoretical supreme authority of the PCV.

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Meanwhile, after the Meeting of Foreign Ministers at San José, Cuban-Venezuelan relations deteriorated sharply. This was a result of Venezuela's having finally voted in support of the resolution condemning extracontinental intervention--after its URD-member foreign minister violated his instructions and abstained--and the withdrawal of the Castroite URD from the government. In July 1961, Guevara publicly described Betancourt as a captive of a pseudo-democratic administration and volunteered to instruct Venezuela as a sister nation regarding "some of Cuba's experiences in the revolutionary field." Foreign Minister Roa's similar accusation that Betancourt was a tool of the US State Department and the CIA climaxed a long series of Cuban propaganda blasts and was the occasion for the definitive break in relations between the two countries in November.

Extensive urban violence erupted around this action, as had occurred sporadically during previous months, reflecting the hardening of political forces into pro- and anti-Castro groupings. By late 1961, the party found itself engaged in a campaign of intensifying violence, centered largely in Caracas and its environs, in cooperation with the MIR and other extremists. Its paramilitary and student elements were deeply committed in this effort.

Other domestic developments accelerated the decision of some PCV leaders to commit their party to the "armed struggle." The defection of the "ARS" faction of the AD in early 1962 further weakened the government's political base. Meanwhile, largely undisciplined and uncontrolled Communist and Mirista student elements--the most fervent Castroites in Venezuela--the extremist leaders of the MIR and URD, and the pro-revolutionary minority of the PCV had virtually transformed a strategy of violence into a fait accompli by the end of 1961. The PCV leadership faced the choice of going along with a tide of events which it did not altogether control, or risking a split in its own ranks, the loss of support of its own students, and the alienation of its extremist partners by adhering to "legality."

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The government crackdown on Communist activities, from late 1960 on, made the final decision easier. President Betancourt was systematically weeding out all Communists and some sympathizers from government and teaching positions, and, perhaps more important, removing them from posts in the Venezuelan Labor Confederation. The last action was cutting off the party's leaders from a main source of mass support. The over-all effect of these measures was to reduce the PCV's assets in the legal or mass struggle and to enhance the attractiveness of the armed struggle. By the end of 1961, the party had far less to lose by resorting to violence than two years earlier.

The climax came in early 1962, in connection with the Inter-American Meeting of Foreign Ministers at Punta del Este, which suspended Cuba from the OAS. At that time, the PCV and MIR, exploiting the dissidence of the "ARS" faction in the AD, attempted to oust President Betancourt's coalition and/or provoke a military take-over. Although the PCV had rejected the MIR's proposal to launch a full-scale revolution as late as December 1961, because conditions were not yet "ripe," the party was already involved in such a strategy for all practical purposes. The discovery of the first of several clandestine Communist-MIR training camps for guerrillas in eastern Venezuela in January 1962 made clear that the armed struggle phase of the party program had actually begun. A few weeks later the politburo ordered the paramilitary leaders to expand their forces and appointed a national command to direct urban and guerrilla paramilitary operations.

During the final stage of the mass struggle, the moderate leadership appeared to lose effective control over the party. The aggressive leaders and student elements advocating revolution partly preempted direction by their activities.

Whether the majority of the central committee or politburo was swept along by the momentum of events or actually ordered them is a moot question. Centralized guidance of terrorism seemed to break down and the "radicals" took charge. In

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the meanwhile, some members of the central committee probably accepted the tide of events reluctantly; others silently acquiesced; and still others may have reversed their position to join the promoters of the armed struggle as prospects for the ouster of Betancourt seemed to improve.

In any event, sharp disagreement on the party's strategy and tactics characterized the central committee plenums of August and October 1961, as well as the Third Congress. Continuing to the present, this dissension has not yet produced an open breach in the party organization--as has been true of the MIR--but has deeply divided the party rank and file and the leadership.

The Communist and leftist-backed military uprisings at Carupano and Puerto Cabello in May and June 1962 may or may not have been endorsed in advance by the politburo and central committee, but they directly involved top leaders of the party. The Carupano revolt led to the "suspension of the political activities" of the PCV and MIR--a euphemism for being outlawed. The two events committed the PCV irrevocably to the primacy of the armed struggle and also signaled a considerable expansion of guerrilla actions.

The central committee plenum of December 1962 placed the formal seal of approval on the armed struggle, but only by a minority of the full committee. The reported vote of 17 to 1 indicates that only about 25 percent of the membership (enlarged at the Third Congress) was in attendance.

The armed struggle phase of the PCV program has passed through two fundamental stages marked by tactical modifications. As of mid-1965 it seems to be entering a third. The first comprehended the period from early 1962 through the elections of December 1963. This stage emphasized urban terrorism--especially in Caracas--supplemented by sporadic guerrilla action designed to divert and weaken the government security forces. The immediate objectives were to disrupt the electoral process and overthrow Betancourt. At times the Communists and their allies seemed close to attaining

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one or both of these objectives. Although some party leaders had theorized and warned that the revolution would probably be "prolonged," this stage also reflected widespread optimism in party ranks that a quick victory was in the offing.

The first stage of armed struggle did not exclude extensive mass action, but assigned it a clearly secondary role. The PCV continued to exploit what legality it still had by negotiating extensively with the opposition political parties for "unity" arrangements in the electoral campaign. In addition, the PCV and MIR representatives in Congress worked effectively with other opposition groups--URD, AD Opposition (ARS), and others--to obstruct government efforts to obtain more effective legislation to enforce law and order and to frustrate the application of strong security measures. Communist and MIR congressmen also exploited their congressional immunity to promote subversive action. In addition, the PCV propagandized against the "repressions" of the regime, for a restoration of full legal status to the PCV and MIR, and for a grant of amnesty to the growing numbers of Mirista and Communist political prisoners.



GUILLERMO GARCIA PONCE
PCV central committee and politburo since 1954, active in paramilitary organization from 1962 until arrest in 1963. Fig. 4.

By early 1964 it was clear that the campaign of urban violence and "militant abstention" from the election--designed to intimidate voters and keep them from the polls--had fallen short of its goals. A large electoral turnout had voted the AD candidate, Raul Leoni, into the presidency and Betancourt had effected a peaceful transfer of power to him in March 1964.

Many within the PCV itself considered the

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tactic a miserable failure. Most of the top leaders were in prison, including many of the principal advocates of the armed struggle, such as Pompeyo Marquez and Guillermo Garcia Ponce. Several student and other young leaders had been killed or captured during the guerrilla and terrorist campaigns. The same was true of Mirista leaders. In addition, the URD was on the verge of expelling the Castroite-Marxist wing from its ranks after discovering from the election results that this group had not in fact enhanced the party's electoral appeal.

There were still other serious battle scars. The party's membership and sympathizer strength had fallen probably as much as 50 percent. Public opinion had turned hostile toward the Communists and the MIR as a result of indiscriminate bombings, murders of policemen, and pointless acts of terrorism, such as the massacre in September 1963 of passengers and national guardsmen aboard an excursion train. The PCV's national organization, its strong labor support, and its propaganda apparatus had also been decimated. It had achieved little with its attempt to develop the National Liberation Front (FLN) as a united front to guide the revolution politically and to control effectively the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), the PCV-MIR paramilitary forces. The FLN and FALN merely formalized the factious PCV-MIR alliance under new titles, but failed to attract any other opposition political elements, except a handful of military defectors and common criminals. Moreover, the MIR had proved to be increasingly independent and impulsive as a revolutionary bedfellow.

On the other hand, the so-called hard-line faction of the PCV was firmly in charge of party policies and had successfully intimidated or squelched the soft-liners, even though the latter could now point to actual Communist reverses to support the "accuracy" of their position. The party had gleaned a number of practical lessons from its experience with urban and rural violence. Although the guerrillas had little peasant support, the paramilitary units in both country and city were intact and constituted a potential threat to political stability

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and a psychological barb to the Leoni government. Finally, the armed struggle was an irreversible path which offered no retreat without risk of a possible breach in PCV ranks, a probable falling out with the MIR, and complete discredit of the PCV before the Venezuelan public.

The first major modification of the revolutionary phase of the program was adopted in 1964 and ratified by the makeshift central committee plenum in the spring of the year. The supremacy of the armed struggle was reaffirmed. As in the past, "other forms of struggle" were subordinated but not excluded. In contrast to the initial emphasis on a quick victory through urban warfare, the party officially adopted the line that the Venezuelan revolution would be a "prolonged struggle" of indefinite duration and insisted that it was a nationally manufactured product-- not a "mechanical transplant" of any foreign experience.

Tactics also shifted. Within the "superior form of armed struggle," guerrilla warfare and development of a supporting peasant base were to receive priority attention, while urban paramilitary action was relegated to a supporting, complementary role. A new effort was to be made to incorporate all opposition forces, regardless of ideology, in the FLN, which was theoretically the supreme political organ of the revolution and director of the military campaigns of the FALN. Its decisions were to be made effective throughout the nation and especially over the military commands. The PCV also decided to intensify its efforts to penetrate the Venezuelan Armed Forces (FAV) and encourage further defection and dissension within their ranks. The failure to attain a quick victory through urban terrorism necessitated these adjustments. The controlling hard-line faction within the PCV was forced to rationalize its strategy for internal party consumption; it had to present a new line of action within the armed struggle or admit its errors in choosing this path to power. While facing up to its tactical--rather than strategic--miscues in pursuing revolution, the PCV tried to portray the

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electoral outcome as additional proof that socialism could not be achieved except through violence. The armed struggle was allegedly provoked by the suppressive measures of "the oligarchy," which had crushed all hope of the "democratic popular" forces for traversing the via pacifica.

The revolutionary phase of the Communist program has not altered substantially since the plenum of 1964. The conduct of guerrilla campaigns and the strengthening of guerrilla forces have been stressed in relation to sporadic urban terrorism during this period. The Communists have allocated the bulk of their sizable funds to keeping the Communist and MIR guerrilla forces alive and capable of making occasional strikes in various parts of the country.

But the party, taking advantage of changes in the situation under the Leoni government, appears as of mid-1965 to be tending toward renewed emphasis on the mass struggle, as foreshadowed by the central committee plenum in the spring of 1964. Hence, it may be at the verge of a second modification in the revolutionary phase of its program. Leoni's coalition government, which includes the AD and two relatively untested partners--the URD and the National Democratic Front (FND)--appears weaker than its predecessor and more inclined toward appeasing leftist pressures.

The PCV views the potential and actual strains in the coalition as offering a fertile field for exploitation. The party is not only maintaining its associations with several leftist groups which remained intact after the 1963 elections but has also been conducting liaison during 1965 with certain leaders of all three coalition parties and with elements of COPEI. Perhaps with excessive optimism, it has interpreted as highly favorable the prospects for "united" action to promote certain issues and objectives, such as release of political prisoners, rehabilitation of the PCV and MIR, and popular demonstrations against increases in the cost of living and unemployment.

Perhaps influenced by these factors, the central committee plenum of April 1965 determined

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that the "great majority" of the Venezuelan people is not at war and hence "war is not today the dominant factor in the country." The party, it decided, must therefore amplify the program with the "most varied forms of struggle, of which the armed struggle is the superior one, but not the only one by any means." The PCV should open its arms to the people and generate a "new mentality" for revolution. The FALN would continue to be the instrument to coordinate and incorporate the masses into the armed struggle, in order to transform it into "the truly dominant form of struggle." The central theme and objective in expanding forms of the mass struggle would be attainment of a "government of democratic peace," embracing all political groups opposed to the "Betancourt gorilla clique."

Essentially the PCV, while retaining the primacy of the "revolution" in theory and practice, was seeking to extend its freedom for overt political action--that is, attempting to reconcile two irreconcilable tactics, [REDACTED]

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One of its purposes was to appease the soft-line faction in the PCV, which had long resented the methods and the results of the hard-line directors. But the new call for "a government of democratic peace" aroused the fears and ire of the hard-line MIR faction, which adamantly opposes any modification of the revolutionary strategy. The PCV has tried to make the line on a "government of democratic peace" more palatable to the MIR by insisting that the guerrillas are in the field, that their actions speak to the Venezuelan people, and hence require no special propaganda.

The PCV program as of mid-1965 seemed to be drifting. Whatever new direction the party chooses, it faces serious problems.

The Conflict Within the PCV Leadership

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divisions arose in the PCV over the issue of the lucha armada, as advocated by the hard-liners, vs. the via pacifica, as advocated by the soft-liners; but it is overly simplified and partly misleading to think of the Venezuelan Communist leaders as divided entirely into hard-liners and soft-liners, or to consider these two terms as equivalent to "pro-Chinese" and "pro-Soviet." Among the PCV leaders a large number--possibly the majority--vacillated, had reservations about one or both programs, or altered their stand on this critical issue after 1960. Factors determining the party's position included not only these leaders' changing estimates of the relative efficacy of the two programs for achieving power, but also personal rivalries among leaders and pressures from the PCV's allies.

The young leaders among the PCV's collaborators--the Marxist wing of AD (which later became the MIR) and the URD--had considerable influence in pushing the Communists into violence. Innately radical by orientation and attracted to sensational methods, many of them had played prominent parts in the clandestine civilian movement which ousted Perez Jimenez. They lost their positions, fame, and publicity shortly after the old guard leaders of the AD and URD returned to Venezuela from exile. Frustrated and resentful when relegated to secondary roles in their parties, these Castroite leaders were prepared to defect with their followers and take any short cut for regaining prestige and power. For them, the step from legal action to insurrection was not a difficult one. Castro

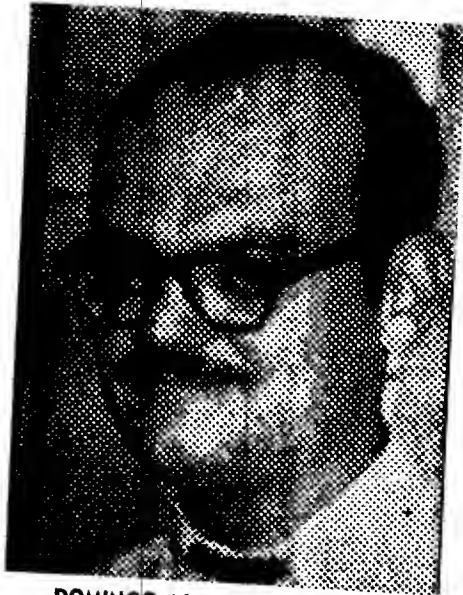


FABRICIO OJEDA
FALN guerrilla leader in Portuguesa State (1965).
Figure 5.

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DOMINGO ALBERTO RANGEL
Leader of soft-line faction on MIR,
arrested in 1963. Figure 6.

and his success provided a powerful concrete example and stimulus.

Among the better known of such young (and then) non-Communist leaders were: Fabricio Ojeda of the URD, head of the Patriotic Junta, congressman, and ultimately an honorary officer in the Cuban revolutionary armed forces; Simon Saez Merida of the AD, acting AD secretary general during the dictatorship, member of the Patriotic Junta, and ultimately a top hard-line leader of the MIR; and Domingo Alberto Rangel of AD, leader of his party's

Marxist faction, first secretary general of the MIR, and devotee of Castro.

In the PCV itself there was also something of a division between older, more moderate leaders at the top and aggressive younger men eager to gain more power within the party. After the arrest of most of the top Communists during 1963, control of the party fell by default to those few central committee members who remained at large and to the directors of the youth and guerrilla movements. The PCV became a radically different organization, as regards leadership, from that existing at the time of the Third Party Congress in March 1961; those taking over were those who had staked their personal futures and political careers on the success of the resort to violence. On the other hand, few of the jailed leaders--including the moderate old guard--were completely uninvolved in the strategy of the lucha armada.

When the Third Congress opened, the PCV already had a strong and apparently growing nucleus of leaders who wanted to adopt the revolutionary line,

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and their position was strengthened by the PCV and MIR youth and the hard-liners in URD and MIR. But only a minority of the central committee, as composed at that time, can be unqualifiedly catalogued as hard or soft-line.

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Ultimately, a dynamic, aggressive faction of the PCV won control of the party and apparently was able to attract the support of those who vacillated on the issue of the armed struggle. At a critical point in Venezuelan politics, the old guard apparently failed to inspire confidence and firm guidance. Leaders like Gustavo Machado, Pedro Ortega Diaz, and Jesus Faria had become wearied by the years of violence, exile, and imprisonment through which they had passed and probably shrank from further intraparty controversy.

Pompeyo Marquez, clandestine leader and principal architect and theorist of the armed struggle, appears to have been the most powerful single personality in the hard-line camp. He is believed to have had the support of such leaders as Teodoro Petkoff, Douglas Bravo, and Guillermo Garcia Ponce, German Lairer, Eloy Torres, Alberto Lovera, Alonso Ojeda Olachea, and Rafael E. Martinez. All these were or became exponents of revolution. Jesus Faria was reportedly the only top leader at the central committee plenum of December 1962 who voted against the "superior form" of struggle. Others who



JESUS FARIA
PCV member since 1936, secretary general and one of three main leaders from 1958 until arrest in 1963. Figure 7.

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apparently had serious reservations about violence, either after the electoral fiasco of December 1963 or after the Third Congress, were Gustavo Machado, Augusto Leon Arocha, Pedro Ortega Diaz, Hector Mujica, Servando Garcia Ponce, and Hernani Portocarrera.

The antagonism between hard and soft-line factions crystallized before the presidential election of December 1963 and the major defeat it entailed for the tactic of violence. The available Communist "white papers" for and against the revolutionary strategy were essentially diatribes containing mutual accusations that the other side was "wrong" in judging Venezuelan conditions and the strength of the enemy. On the other hand, both factions seemed to recognize that "revolutionary strategy," once initiated, left little face-saving means of retreat for the party.

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The policy of the hard line was staunchly defended by student and guerrilla leaders. They merely mouthed the thoughts of Marquez. According to Alfredo Maneiro, a top guerrilla field commander, "no one" doubted that the proper path was the armed struggle--the question was whether time and conditions were ripe. Maneiro claimed that the very survival of the FALN guerrilla forces in Venezuela after three years of fighting proved the "rightness" of the decision. Similarly, guerrilla leader Douglas Bravo defended the strategy during an interview with a journalist who allegedly penetrated into his retreat in the mountains of Falcon State. Bravo explained that "events" and the example of Castro determined the ineluctable path to revolution in Venezuela. Once embarked on this path, "we discovered that retreat was impossible." Bravo admitted that although there was a "radicalization" in the heart of the party, "certain directors, among them the oldest, remained skeptical about the fate of the guerrillas and even questioned their necessity."

The Soft-Liners' Activity

The soft-liners seemed to lose all effective voice in party councils after late 1962 but apparently discussed policy among themselves and the means to rectify the serious "errors" of party "adventurism." They complained bitterly about the heavy-handed, railroad tactics of the hard-line leaders. They also sought the company of the soft-line faction of the MIR to share in their misery.

The PCV soft-line faction condemned the armed struggle as the reckless distortion of the true



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"national liberation" in Venezuela by a "capricious" and irresponsible group of MIR and PCV leaders and youth elements. These elements, they charged, "ruthlessly suppressed" all opinion opposed to the "erroneous path toward the debacle." The "messianic figure of Castro" loomed in the background to inspire the "subjective drunkenness" of the militant Communists. In addition, the soft-liners believed that the mass struggle was shunted aside by the PCV, partly to prevent "the hotheads of the MIR" from pre-empting the Venezuelan revolution.

The soft-liners variously (branded) the era of violence with epithets, such as "total defeat," "fiasco," and the product of "petty bourgeois caprice." They noted that the armed struggle had resulted in the loss of the party's assets in the legal sphere and the imprisonment of its most experienced leaders. They also alleged that "the debacle of the revolutionary movement was accelerated once its direction fell into hands even more inexperienced and ignorant than the predecessors." According to a soft-line historical view of this period, the Communists wound up in 1965 "without a party, unions, and popular masses." The author recognized, however, that valuable experience had been gained through the armed struggle and conceded that the "small flame" of the revolutionary struggle and the "impotent guerrilla nuclei" had to be kept alive.

Soft-liners did not hesitate to denounce or criticize the armed struggle program before leaders of the CPSU when opportunities presented themselves. For example, it was a soft-line representative--Servando Garica Ponce, TASS representative in Caracas--who planted the famous "interview" of MIR soft-liner Americo Chacon, which appeared in the Soviet party paper Pravda in July 1964. Chacon roundly criticized the errors of the armed struggle strategy in Venezuela and called for a return to the mass struggle; his statements adequately parroted the feelings of his counterparts in the PCV. Carlos Augusto Leon, central committee member and one of the leading soft-liners, probably complained about the revolutionary program

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when visiting Moscow in 1964. A few months later, in Venezuela, he briefed two visiting TASS correspondents on the egregious distortions made about the strength of the guerrilla movement. He apparently hoped his presentation would reach influential ears in Moscow.

The latest evolution of the PCV program, which places renewed emphasis on various forms of mass action centered around attaining a "government of democratic peace," indicates in part an effort toward rapprochement between the factions of party leadership. This new line probably had the endorsement of many of the imprisoned senior leaders of the party, including Pompeyo Marquez, principal designer of the revolutionary strategy. Writing from prison under the pseudonym of "Carlos Valencia" in April 1965, Marquez made statements with definite soft-line flavor:

All the objective conditions exist to attain a government of democratic peace, which comprehends full amnesty, the total enforcement of the constitution, defense of freedom of expression, rehabilitation of the PCV and MIR, and putting in operation the measures which favor the masses and the development of the independence of the nation.

Concentrating all efforts in this direction; uniting all those who, in one form or another, may favor a struggle for these objectives; placing the great masses in motion, utilizing all the forms of struggle with boldness, firmness, and perseverance in order to win over to the national trends all the factors of power, are tasks which cannot be avoided under any pretext. And ones which the revolutionaries are capable of promoting with success.

This is the most impressive method of breaking the continuismo of the Betancourt policy; of ending a period of pre-eminence of a regime which has turned its

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back on Venezuela and the great national majorities.

Privately, Alberto Lovera, the top leader of the PCV paramilitary forces, noted that "the immense majority" of the central committee had endorsed the tactic of working for a "government of democratic peace."

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II. FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON THE PCV

During the period since 1958, the PCV has been subject to a number of influences and pressures from abroad. While maintaining the traditional link with Moscow, the party has apparently sought or welcomed material and propaganda support from all international Communist sources and has been willing to say the right thing at the right place to obtain it. Of the varied foreign influences exerted on the PCV, those from Cuba have certainly been the most important. The Cuban ingredient, indeed, is indispensable to render the recent history of the party rational and comprehensible.

Castroism and the PCV

The impact of Cuban events on Venezuelan public opinion has already been noted; this impact was particularly heavy on the PCV. Without the Cuban revolution and the magnetic personal appeal of Castro, it is unlikely that the moderate majority of the politburo and the central committee would have chosen the armed struggle as the "inevitable" route to power. The emotional attraction of Castro's example is well illustrated by the PCV's willingness to attempt an artificial transplant of his Sierra Maestra experience and undertake guerrilla warfare with inadequately trained leaders, little peasant support, and only limited knowledge of local terrain and other conditions. The connection of course can be seen in finer detail in the beards and berets, fatigues and cigars, pockets stuffed with clip pencils, and other Castroite accessories copied by the city-dwelling Venezuelan guerrilla leaders, many of whom were professional university students in Caracas. Certainly neighboring Colombia, where the Communists had been involved in rural violence for many years and at one period in extensive guerrilla operations, had never been such an inspiration to the PCV.

The importance of the Cuban example was acknowledged by both factions within the PCV. In the view of a soft-liner, the "Cuban example" and "the messianic figure of Castro" fired the imagination of "the masses, the petty bourgeois, and the party hotheads" and created the climate for insurrection.

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Douglas Bravo, the guerrilla leader, noted the same effects. When explaining the PCV's resort to the armed struggle, he ranked the Cuban example first among causes and the virtual sine qua non of the Venezuelan national liberation movement:

First, just one year after the abortive Venezuelan revolution of 23 January 1958, Cuba strikes like a thunderbolt against legalism and skepticism. The victory of an anti-imperialist revolution is possible in South America, not in 20 or 30 years, but now. That is the bomb about which one cannot talk enough, although, on the other hand, one always does talk too much about Cuba when he wants to describe a revolution in South America based on the Cuban model.

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What made the Cuban example especially potent was the evident fact that Castro had won against tremendous military odds in an area "at the doorstep" of the United States. Nor did the PCV overlook the point that Castro's success won him extensive military, political, and economic support from the USSR and other Communist powers. Such aid implied an express endorsement of Castro's methods for achieving power and suggested that similar bounty might be forthcoming to others following in his path.

The Castro regime worked actively by various means to strengthen its appeal in Venezuela. After mid-1959, a steady stream of Communists, Miristas, and other leftists traveled to Cuba--some of them frequently--to be feted and indoctrinated at the fountainhead of regional revolution. Marquez, Ojeda, Rangel, Martinez, Bravo, Gallegos, Lovera and many others who became the prominent figures in the armed struggle made their pilgrimages to Havana.

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Apart from this direct revolutionary stimulus to Venezuelan leaders, the controlled Havana radio and press after about mid-1960 kept up a relentless barrage of anti-Betancourt propaganda which directly encouraged Venezuelan extremists to violence. The message from Havana was loud, clear, and consistent, with variations on a single theme: it called for Venezuelan patriots to rise up and rid themselves of Betancourt, the lackey of imperialism, and to use bullets rather than ballots to reach their goals. Venezuelan leftists were advised not to wait for revolutionary conditions to ripen, but to make their own conditions without delay, as Castro had done. This propaganda, which included the frequent pronouncements of top Cuban officials, left no doubt that Venezuela was the leading target of Castro's program for exporting socialist-type upheavals in the hemisphere.

Once the armed struggle was well under way, Cuban propaganda publicized and exaggerated the "successes" of the FLN/FALN operations and gave unconditional guarantee of the solidarity of Cuba with the "popular struggle" in Venezuela. Che Guevara, whose book on guerrilla warfare was a best seller among the Venezuelan revolutionaries and whose articles were circulated within the PCV, made a typical pronouncement in late 1964:

The Venezuelan patriots to the east and west of Caracas have liberated areas.... Let us always remember that the presence of a living, combative Cuba is an example which gives hope and moves all men of the entire world who struggle for their liberation, particularly the patriots of our continent who speak our language.

Cuba also gave more tangible assistance to the PCV, but with the implicit condition that overt revolutionary activity be undertaken. Probably the most important type of Cuban aid was the training of cadres in sabotage, use of explosives, and tactics of urban and guerrilla warfare. An estimated 400 Venezuelans had completed courses in these subjects by the end of 1964 and had returned to their country to provide leadership and "technical" skill for the revolution

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there. Cuban financial grants, primarily but not exclusively through the PCV, cannot be estimated accurately but were vital to the FALN because the guerrillas could not "live off the land." One Cuban defector estimated that direct support to the FLN/FALN from mid-1960 to the end of 1964 was about \$1 million. All forms of Cuban subsidies to the PCV, MIR, and FLN/FALN since 1960, including propaganda support, training, and travel expenditures, may, however, amount to several millions of dollars. There have been many reported attempts by Cuba to transport arms to Venezuela direct or through other countries--Algeria, Colombia, and British Guiana--but the three-ton arms cache discovered by the Venezuelan Government in November 1963 is the only sizable shipment on which there is confirmation of Cuban origin.

Since the Havana Conference of Latin American Communist parties in November 1964, Cuban policy toward the Venezuelan armed struggle has been modified to some degree. For example, there are indications that Cuba is reluctant to train large numbers of Venezuelans in guerrilla operations, as it has in the past, and that it will not risk compromise by direct shipment of arms from Cuban ports. These changes have possibly been adopted under the continuing pressure of the USSR.

On the other hand, Castro has staked his prestige and bid for leadership of the Communist revolution in the hemisphere largely on the success of the Venezuelan venture and may still be supplying substantial sums of money to the PCV for distribution to the FALN guerrillas. Cuba also is probably financing the FLN/FALN "diplomatic" missions in Havana and possibly Venezuelan revolutionary agents in Paris, London, and Rome--and backing their efforts to obtain foreign support. Cuban propaganda in behalf of the Venezuelan armed struggle continues without abatement and is partly systematized through special pro-Venezuelan organizations and radio programs in Havana. Moreover, Cuban officials, as late as the end of 1964, had not altered their view that success for the Venezuelan revolution would come in the not too distant future. In any event, their estimate was far more optimistic than that of the PCV leaders, although the latter apparently did not try to destroy these illusions.

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The PCV remains highly sensitive to the opinion of Castro and other Cuban officials. For example, the party made special efforts to justify to the Cubans in the spring of 1965 its program for a "government of democratic peace" and other aspects of the mass struggle, as set forth in the central committee plenum of that date. Moreover, when the PCV learned that a derogatory rumor had reached Castro's ears about an alleged split of the party into three factions--one for peaceful methods, one for conciliation and compromise with the ruling forces, and one inflexibly backing armed struggle--the party hierarchy immediately took steps to rectify this "falsehood."

The Soviet Attitude Toward the PCV

The attitude of the CPSU toward the traditionally pro-Soviet PCV after it became committed to the armed struggle was largely governed by broad considerations of Soviet foreign policy; by the relations and loyalties of Communist parties throughout the world; and by the Chinese challenge to Moscow's primacy in determining the strategy of the international Communist movement. Moscow's policy was affected largely by its recognition of the predominant influence of the United States in Latin America. Soviet leaders seemed well aware--and even more keenly so after October 1962--that to endorse an openly aggressive course in Latin America invited a response from the US and also risked destructive attack from strong "indigenous forces of reaction" such as the military.

The ambiguous and vaguely defined Soviet policy toward the PCV, at least until the end of 1964, was closely related to Soviet problems in dealing with the Castro regime. Moscow's support for Latin American Communists has to some degree always been measured against the USSR's most important goal of assuring the political and economic viability of Cuba. After the missile crisis and the threat which it posed to world peace, the USSR apparently wanted to avoid additional confrontations with the United States over the Cuban issue. It also wanted to avoid any international incidents which might be provoked by Castro's free-wheeling attempts to support revolution in the rest of Latin America. Castro's deep involvement in the Venezuelan armed struggle probably suggested to the CPSU that he was most likely to be compromised in this area. At the same time, Moscow and Peking

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were competing for Castro's affections and the Kremlin could not press him too hard without running the risk of losing him to the Chinese.

After the discovery in November 1963 of the Cuban arms cache in Venezuela--the very type of "boat-rocking" the Kremlin was seeking to avoid--Soviet leaders probably stepped up efforts to convince Castro to iron out his own economic difficulties and curb his support for militant groups outside Cuba. Khrushchev reportedly insisted at one point that Cuba stop training Venezuelans in guerrilla warfare and stop risking its own self-preservation by other types of interventionist activity. The Cubans chafed under these pressures, but apparently conformed to them in some degree. At any rate, the Soviet effort to interdict Castro's foreign adventurism may also reflect a measure of CPSU skepticism about the wisdom of the national liberation movement in Venezuela.

Moscow's difficulties in controlling Castro, his vacillation in the Sino-Soviet dispute, his involvement in the Venezuelan revolution, and Chinese accusations that Moscow opposed the use of violence in areas dominated by "imperialism" left the CPSU little room for maneuver in dealings with the PCV. The Chinese would certainly have pounced on any Soviet pressure on the PCV to return to the mass struggle or any Soviet criticism of the armed struggle in Venezuela as a case in point for their "revisionist" charges against Khrushchev. Thus the Soviet appraisal of the Venezuelan armed struggle was submerged in the Cuban and Chinese dilemmas.

Although the PCV is believed to have dispatched a high-level leader to Moscow to "explain" the bases for the Venezuelan revolution after its adoption by the party in 1962, there apparently was no consultation with CPSU leaders in advance. Despite the neutralist stance adopted by the PCV in the Sino-Soviet dispute, Moscow was probably fully aware that the Venezuelan armed struggle was largely of Castroite rather than Chinese inspiration, and that the PCV was not "pro-Chinese" in orientation. There are indications that the CPSU--at least before the PCV's failure to disrupt the elections of December 1963--estimated the Communist and pro-Communist paramilitary forces

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to be stronger than they were and to have a reasonable chance to overthrow the Betancourt regime.

The ambiguous attitude of Moscow toward the PCV's domestic program--at least through 1963--contrasts sharply with its heavy-handed pressure to align the Venezuelan party behind the CPSU in the Sino-Soviet dispute. On the latter issue, Khrushchev himself reportedly attempted to extract compliance from one of the top Venezuelan Communist leaders in early 1963.

Some specific Soviet actions reflect an acquiescence in the armed struggle, if not positive approval. For example, the USSR provided training for at least one small group of Venezuelans in paramilitary operations, although this assistance was probably designed to match similar Chinese training and to undercut any possible Chinese allegations that the USSR opposed the national liberation in Venezuela.

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On the other hand, there is no evidence that the CPSU furnished any sizable financial aid to the PCV for carrying out the revolution prior to 1964.

Trends in Soviet propaganda on the PCV, FLN, FALN, and the armed struggle in general reflect the changing and ambiguous Soviet attitudes toward the Venezuelan party and program. Initially, the Soviet media praised the "popular" struggle in Venezuela; but in early 1964 there was a shift in tone, content, and volume of the propaganda related to the PCV. These modifications may have been connected with the failure of the party to disrupt the elections, the discovery of the Cuban arms cache, and the PCV's continuing insistence on neutrality in the Sino-Soviet rift. In addition, the Venezuelan revolution was creating the impression among some Latin American parties that the PCV was following a "pro-Chinese" line.

At this point, the soft-line leaders of the PCV--who professed absolute loyalty to the CPSU and

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branded the hard-liners "pro-Chinese"--found a more favorable reception in Moscow for their denunciations of the strategy of armed struggle.

It was in July 1964 that Pravda published the statements of a leading Venezuelan soft-liner, Americo Chacon, roundly denouncing the armed struggle and appealing for a return to the via pacifica. In addition to this sharp rebuke, Pravda published in September similar statements against the program of violence by Miguel Otero Silva, ex-Communist and publisher. A few weeks later, Eduardo Gallegos Mancera, a PCV secretary for international relations, received a chilly reception in Moscow. In contrast, he had been feted during visits to Peking and Hanoi that summer, and his pro-Chinese revolutionary statements received extensive publicity in these two capitals. Moreover, Gallegos' published comments in Moscow were stripped of the militant revolutionary content and stressed the PCV's attempts to restore peace to Venezuela. But even these criticisms by the CPSU of the Venezuelan party and the armed struggle were essentially indirect in their approach.

Khrushchev's ouster and the Havana Conference of Latin American parties--which was directed and controlled, though perhaps not initiated, by Moscow--brought about a perceptible adjustment in CPSU attitudes toward the PCV. Soviet policy began to assume a clear-cut form compared to its previous vagueness and ambiguity. Similarly, the priorities of Soviet objectives in relation to the parties in Latin America seemed to have changed. The new Soviet line no longer sought express public commitment by Communist parties to the USSR in the rift with China. Instead, the CPSU apparently was attempting to counter Chinese influence by preventing schisms in orthodox parties, checking the multiplication of pro-Chinese organizations, and restoring a measure of its former influence over Latin American party programs, particularly its guidance over revolutionary movements in progress. A high-level representative of the CPSU in early 1965 professed to recognize the right of fraternal parties to pursue their own independent "patriotic" programs based on their own evaluation of conditions, and even to voice occasional disagreement to Moscow, as the Italian party has done. He also conceded that violence

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in promoting the "national liberation" was still a valid concept in underdeveloped areas, even in Latin America to a certain extent.

The Havana meeting of Latin American parties in late November 1964 was essentially a (rapprochement) or gentlemen's agreement among the CPSU, the Cubans, and the other orthodox parties in the hemisphere. The decisions set forth new guidelines for revolutions as well as for regional and other international support for these revolutions. The CPSU accepted the armed struggles where they were in progress and urged Communist organizations to exercise greater control over these movements; it seemed to recognize that the clock could not be turned back on these movements without serious-to-disastrous effects on the parties involved. The Venezuelan liberation movement was specifically singled out for the seal of regional and Soviet approval, possibly because Castro had given it top priority in his subversive campaigns and despite the skepticism of certain fraternal parties in the area.

The joint communiqué on the final resolutions of the Havana conference, released simultaneously from Moscow and Havana in early 1965, called for hemisphere support for the Venezuelan armed struggle. Among other things, it also called for a campaign to obtain the release of political prisoners. That Pompeyo Marquez, architect of the Venezuelan "prolonged struggle," was the third among a few prominent prisoners listed by name in this resolution, suggests that Moscow did not view his influential leadership as hopelessly Chinese in orientation.

Conforming to the decisions taken at Havana and subsequently "edited" in Moscow, the CPSU in the spring of 1965 informed the PCV that it would "redouble its efforts" to promote the liberation of Venezuela and would encourage other fraternal parties to do the same. The top leader of the Venezuelan paramilitary forces, one of two identified Venezuelan delegates at the Havana meeting, was in Moscow shortly thereafter and personally requested moral and financial backing from CPSU officials. He subsequently admitted that the Venezuelan guerrilla movement depended on "outside aid" and expressed confidence that it would not be cut off. The substantial sums of money reaching the PCV from abroad

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in early 1965 to finance the FLN/FALN operations were possibly supplied in part, and perhaps mainly, by Moscow through carefully concealed channels.

The belated blessing which Moscow gave to the Venezuelan armed struggle in late 1964 seems in the nature of a reluctant but gracious recognition of an accomplished fact over which Moscow had little influence. In any event the CPSU's relations with the PCV after late 1961 fell far short of whole-hearted enthusiasm and support of the PCV program. The conciliatory moves by Moscow in early 1965 appear an attempt to restore subtly a measure of guidance and control over the PCV which was weakened by the PCV's unique test of its autonomy in the Sino-Soviet rift.

In any event, given the advantages of hindsight, the CPSU probably came to harbor some serious reservations on the resort to the armed struggle in Venezuela and Castro's role in it, apart from the potential repercussions on Cuba's own security of a Cuban intervention in Venezuelan affairs. Efforts of the Italian Communist Party to encourage the PCV to moderate its program toward emphasis on rebuilding mass support may have been encouraged--if not initiated--by the CPSU. Moscow is not likely to have viewed with indifference the decimation of the extensive assets for the "mass struggle" of one of the largest and most influential parties in Latin America--and in a country where "imperialist" capital investment is highly concentrated. Even though Moscow had no diplomatic mission and no cultural and economic stake of any size in Caracas, it had reason to regret that Castro did not attempt to cultivate friendly relations with Venezuela and to refrain from intervening in Venezuela's internal affairs. Had Cuba followed these two policies, Venezuela rather than the USSR might have ended up supplying most of Cuban oil import requirements and Cuba might have remained a member (in poor standing) of the OAS and unfettered by the restrictions of an OAS boycott. The cost of Cuba's tangling with the Venezuelan Government and supporting the Venezuelan armed struggle was borne indirectly by Moscow.

The article of Vadim Listov in the May 1965 issue of New Times may also suggest the CPSU's preference

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for the traditional united front strategy in Latin America. Listov noted that the Dominican crisis demonstrated the efficacy of broad, united leftist fronts in the area as a means for loosening the grip of "imperialism." Two years earlier the same Soviet journalist was writing praise of the revolutionary armed struggle in Venezuela under the direction of the FLN/FALN.

In sum, Moscow's approach to the diffuse and varied conditions under which Communist parties operate in Latin America had been quite pragmatic, and largely responsive to internal conditions beyond Soviet control. The Russians probably recognize their present inability to control the policies of the Latin American left and the unlikelihood of their achieving such control. Moscow's effort to exert influence over Latin American insurgent groups has been tempered by its experiences in Afro-Asia, e.g., the Congo. As a general rule, the Russians have encouraged rebel factions to adopt less militant revolutionary programs and to concentrate instead on political action in collaboration with other "progressive forces." This attitude reflects Moscow's view that prevalent political conditions in Latin America demonstrate that the "united front" tactic holds out the promise of more success in more countries than any other course.

At the same time, the USSR's political and economic stake in the continent is relatively small and it stands to lose little by providing insurgents with some assistance as long as it does not risk running seriously afoul of the US. The USSR considers such support as the only alternative to a complete loss of control and influence over "progressive forces." In Venezuela, the Soviet's action in supplying some of the funds for the prosecution of the FLN/FALN's campaign of rural guerrilla warfare was largely motivated by the hope of regaining some leverage over the future direction of the effort in Venezuela.

Communist China and the Venezuelan Armed Struggle

The PCV's program and rationale for the armed struggle, particularly after the party placed emphasis on rural rather than urban warfare, seems on the surface to have been patterned closely after

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Chinese revolutionary doctrine. Chinese encouragement of wars of national liberation in underdeveloped areas had not completely neglected the Venezuelans. Three PCV leaders, including Pompeyo Marquez, were among the Latin American representatives in Peking in 1959. Mao had lectured this group on Chinese revolutionary experience and emphasized its applicability to the Latin American area, pointing out that the Cuban upheaval demonstrated that the "imperialist paper tiger" could be defeated in its own "backyard." Other Venezuelan Communists have traveled to China and some have been trained there in subsequent years.

But the Chinese have not exercised a pronounced influence on the path which the PCV has chosen to follow since 1959. In fact, it is unusual that the hard-line faction of the PCV did not turn more to China to reinforce its arguments in justification of the armed struggle and to obtain tangible forms of assistance from this source. It must have been aware that the Ecuadorean Communists were given generous Chinese aid on one occasion for the preparatory stage of revolution.

Although many PCV leaders are versed in Chinese Communist history and probably have considerable admiration for Chinese "achievements," the hard and soft line Venezuelan Communists, respectively, do not in any sense fit into pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet molds. Not thus far, at any rate. By way of comparison, several other Latin American Communist parties, most of which have not yet engaged in the "armed struggle," have fragmented and developed separate pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet organizations. The Colombian Communist Party is a recent example.

In a general way, the PCV has been influenced by Chinese doctrine on revolutionary strategy--doctrine which in practical application is not easily differentiated from Cuban theory--but apparently to no greater degree than most Latin American parties. The Venezuelan Communist definition of armed revolution as the "superior form of struggle" is identical to the Chinese line and probably of Chinese inspiration. PCV leaders have also studied the major works of Chinese apostles like Mao and Liu Shao-chi, and apparently applied some of these ideas ex post facto to their own experiences in the domestic

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The PCV leaders see some parallels between their experience and that of the Chinese, but mostly in retrospect. The important guerrilla leader, Douglas Bravo, has observed that Venezuela will pass through Mao's three stages of guerrilla struggle. Moreover, Venezuelan Communists are told to follow certain Chinese tactics; the guerrillas, for example, are advised to adhere to Mao's instruction and be "like fish in the water." Chinese theory, example, and influence did not stimulate the PCV to action, however. The Venezuelan party emphasized a non-Chinese tactic by initially adopting urban terrorism in the search for a quick victory, and turned to guerrilla warfare and the "prolonged struggle" in the countryside only after this effort failed. It might be noted, however, that this approach was also non-Cuban in origin and dictated by the fact that the PCV had an urban apparatus and urban support but little peasant backing. When pointing to the need to revitalize urban terrorist units as an essential complement to guerrilla warfare, a PCV paramilitary leader recently stated, "This is not China."

Geographical remoteness, the PCV's traditional tie to Moscow, limitations on Chinese resources available for subversive activities in Latin America, and the problems in channeling aid without an established diplomatic mission in the hemisphere (except in Cuba) are factors limiting Chinese influence on the PCV. The Chinese are known to have trained at least three groups of Venezuelan Communists in guerrilla warfare, but are not believed to have provided any other direct support in sizable amounts for the armed struggle in Venezuela as of mid-1965. A party leader claimed in August, however, that he had received a Chinese commitment to supply substantial monetary aid.

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Despite their nominal impact on the PCV, the Chinese Communists have consistently regarded the Venezuelan armed struggle with unqualified approval. They have also displayed a continuing interest in Venezuelan political, economic, and social developments. Chinese propaganda media have praised the "popular revolution" in Venezuela and its leadership in glowing terms.

An article in the April 1965 issue of Peking Review singled out the Venezuelan and Colombian parties as the two in Latin America which have "taken the path of the armed struggle" to prove the axiom that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." In late 1963, the secretary general of the CCP, while lecturing a group of Latin American trainees, noted that Venezuela was a country which could be a focal point for coordinating revolutionary activities in the hemisphere.

CCP approval of the PCV path and the trend of violence in Venezuela was also demonstrated in August 1964 by the lavish treatment given to visiting PCV leader Eduardo Gallegos Mancera.

Attitudes of Other Communist Parties

Several of the pro-Soviet Latin American Communist parties have apparently viewed the armed struggle in Venezuela with misgivings. Some may have registered strong disapproval. There is little available information to appraise the attitudes of individual parties and leaders toward the PCV during this period. Except for the Cuban party and the

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Colombian Communist Party, the PCV's liaison with fraternal organizations in the area has been only limited and sporadic. The resentment of several Latin American Communist parties against Cuba for promoting subversive activities in their countries through other than "orthodox" channels may, however, have rubbed off on the PCV.

At the "Continental Congress in Support of the Cuban Revolution," held in Brasilia in 1963, the PCV is believed to have faced sharp criticism for pursuing "Chinese deviationist" policies from representatives of some pro-Soviet parties in attendance. Probably on orders from his party, Alberto Lovera, the PCV delegate to Brasilia, traveled to certain South American capitals after the meeting to explain the PCV program of armed struggle to fraternal organizations. Although his itinerary is not known, he did confer in Santiago with the secretary general of the Chilean Communist Party, who reportedly declined to extend public "solidarity" to the PCV. About one year earlier, the Brazilian Communist Party had reportedly criticized the PCV for launching guerrilla warfare without mass support--a criticism presumably forwarded in writing to the PCV central committee in Caracas.

The Havana meeting of Latin American Communist parties in late 1964 adopted a resolution calling for hemispheric solidarity and support for the Venezuelan armed struggle. This resolution was not passed with spontaneous enthusiasm, however. Alberto Lovera, one of the Venezuelan delegates, described the attitudes among Latin American parties as not precisely an "acquiescence in" but rather a "forced tolerance toward the armed path." Although he noted that other Latin American party representatives gained a far better understanding of the PCV program after his bilateral discussions with them at Havana, he also admitted that they were not completely satisfied with his explanations. Moreover, the delegates at Havana were not prepared to give a blanket endorsement to the Venezuelan thesis that "the only path of the Communist movement in Latin America is war."

Lovera's commentary on what happened behind the scenes at Havana suggests that the resolutions

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as applied to the armed struggle in Latin America were to a large degree a compromise between Moscow and the pro-Soviet parties on the one hand and Cuba and those parties which were already involved in revolution on the other.

The Italian Communist Party's Role

One other Communist party which has shown an active interest in the Venezuelan situation is the Italian Communist Party (PCI). In recent years, the PCI has maintained contacts with both the hard-line and soft-line factions of the Venezuelan party, which has had its own representatives in Rome, at least for extensive periods. Aristo Ciruzzi, an official of the PCI foreign relations bureau, has made two known trips to Caracas in the past two years, and has stated that his party is a main channel of communication between the Castro regime and the PCV.

The PCI has taken the presumably self-chosen role of mentor to the Venezuelan party and go-between for the CPSU. Ciruzzi claims that the latter role has the consent of Moscow, though he does not assert that the CPSU requested the services. Two incidents during the past year, however, suggest that Moscow may have given more than tacit consent to the Italian effort. One was the dispatch of Ciruzzi to Caracas in late 1964 to obtain more accurate information on the true status of the PCV than was available in Rome--a trip which followed shortly after the Havana conference. The other incident was the confiscation of a sizable sum of money from an Italian Communist who entered Venezuela in April 1965.

The PCI's standing with the Venezuelan party was probably enhanced by the Italian party's known position on the Sino-Soviet dispute in defense of the equality of all Communist parties and the exclusive right of each to interpret the proper path to socialism within its own "jurisdiction." The PCI's avowed purpose is to encourage the Venezuelan party to rebuild its popular base by resuming gradually a program of mass struggle and by reducing the emphasis on the armed struggle.

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The Italian party had no perceptible impact on the Venezuelan Communist program before early 1964; but it is a reasonable surmise that the PCV's search for a "government of democratic peace," as set forth in the central committee plenum of April 1965, may conform to what the Italians--possibly speaking for the Soviets--have in mind for the party's future. The FCI's ability to influence the Venezuelan party is of course limited unless the Italian guidance is known to echo Moscow's views and unless some tangible assistance is held out as inducement.

The Algerian Example and the PCV

As a successful, socialist-oriented uprising against a colonial power, the Algerian example exerted an influence on the PCV comparable, in a limited way, to the Cuban revolution. PCV leaders apparently found the Algerian armed struggle more comprehensible, realistic, and applicable to their own environment than that of China; they probably believed that the settlement of the Algerian conflict would have similarities to their own "inevitable victory against imperialism." Venezuelan Communists dissected the Algerian example of the "prolonged struggle," which also combined both urban and rural violence, and were duly impressed by what they found.

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Castro's close ties with the Ben Bella regime probably intensified the PCV's interest. In late 1962, Castro reportedly advised Venezuelan Communists that Algeria should be the PCV "supply base for war materials." Prior to Ben Bella's ouster, the Cubans were believed to be exploring the possibilities of channeling aid to the Venezuelans through Algeria. The MIR was also seeking help from this source.

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Algeria also appears to have provided the model for the establishment of the FLN and FALN in Venezuela as a "united front" political-military structure. Both the titles and objectives of these

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organizations, which the PCV and MIR superimposed on the armed struggle, were directly adapted from Algerian prototypes. The FLN was designed to be a supreme political authority directing and coordinating the armed movement (FALN) but sufficiently flexible ideologically to allow for the incorporation of all "patriotic" groups in the liberation movement. As early as the Third Congress in 1961, the PCV had reportedly contemplated forming such a front after the Algerian model as soon as conditions "ripened."

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III. THE PCV's INTERNATIONAL POSITION

The PCV's primary concern during the period under review has continued to be with domestic developments, not with international Communist party affairs. But it has shown itself conscious of the larger world also--partly in the rationale it adopted to justify its move from the via pacifica to the lucha armada, and partly in the position it has taken regarding the Sino-Soviet dispute.

The PCV's Rationale of its Program

In its shift from the mass struggle to the armed struggle the PCV, as has been noted in some detail earlier in this paper, was motivated by a variety of considerations in which calculations of immediate advantage and other opportunistic factors played a more significant part than ideology. The victorious hard-line faction nevertheless attempted to concoct a kind of theory and philosophy of revolution after the strategy was well advanced. The purpose was twofold: first, to justify the program to dissenters, weak-hearted temporizers and adamant opponents within its own ranks and those of its allies; second, to explain the armed struggle to a larger public, including the international Communist family. The last audience was particularly important in view of the PCV's position of neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute. In a general sense, the relative timing of action and philosophical justification followed that of Cuba. Castro formulated his theory of revolution and exported it to the hemisphere after his successful performance.

Pompeyo Marquez, the veteran PCV agitator and clandestine leader, was also the intellectual theorist of the lucha armada. Other Communist writers in the hard-line camp and guerrilla leaders, like Douglas Bravo, repeated his ideas faithfully with no innovations; the hard-line faction of the MIR did the same.

Some of his thoughts on revolution and those of other Communists appeared in Communist and non-Communist public information media, foreign and domestic.

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Many of these articles on revolution were drafted after the party suffered reverses in the strategy of armed struggle.

The central theme of the ex post facto philosophy of revolution in Venezuela was its "inevitability." The hard-liners maintained that the "progressive forces" had exhausted every means of avoiding revolution and violence, but "the oligarchy" and "imperialist forces" had closed all approaches to the via pacifica. The alternative to perpetual "submission to colonialism" was the path of revolution.

Even this inflexible premise was flexible. Marquez did not denounce the "delusion of the electoral farce" until the PCV and MIR had failed in their efforts to work out a united electoral front on satisfactory terms with one or more of the legal opposition parties for the December 1963 elections. He only then asserted that "the struggle is raised to a loftier plane. Victory must be sought through processes where heroism, courage, and the combative decisions form the elemental principles to unite our people for conquest."

Marquez reinforced the thesis of "inevitable revolution" with the doctrine of "inevitable victory" after the reverses in the 1963 elections. This idea seemed to be related to boosting morale among the militants. In their doctrine the Communists also stressed the rationalization that the suppressive measures of the oligarchic ruling groups had provoked the revolution of "self-defense" against annihilation of the "democratic forces." This argument was almost identical to one long used by the neighboring Colombian Communist Party, which had opposed with force efforts to re-establish governmental authority over Communist-controlled rural enclaves on grounds of "autodefense." The PCV claimed that the Betancourt regime had embarked on

a violent counterrevolution against the Venezuelan people.... The people are forced to respond with revolutionary war in order to advance along the road which leads to the conquest of their independence and sovereignty. This is a just war. Justice is

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on the side of our people. Victory will inexorably be on their side, too.

After December 1963 Marquez, who apparently had always doubted the chances for a quick victory, emphasized that the armed struggle would be "prolonged." "Prolonged" was not precisely defined, although wide variations in the length of the Cuban, Algerian, and Chinese revolutions were pointed out to explain the difficulty of setting any deadline. Furthermore, the party not only acknowledged the prolonged nature of the revolution, but asserted that it would be "fierce and brutal" for a very obvious reason derived from a modified Chinese Communist proverb: The monopolistic and oligarchic forces would not readily relinquish Venezuela, "the most priceless jewel in the imperial Yankee crown. Imperialism and oligarchism are indeed paper tigers but only strategically speaking. Tactically speaking, they are tigers.

Cuba was a principal source of inspiration of PCV doctrine on revolution. The writings and speeches of Castro and Che Guevara and the Second Declaration of Havana (February 1962) were quoted extensively [redacted] as having unquestioned validity. For example, the PCV endorsed the Cuban premise: "In America and in the rest of the world, the revolution will win out, but revolutionaries will not be able to sit in the doorsteps of their homes and watch the cadaver of imperialism pass by." Similarly the PCV swallowed the Cuban gospel that:

wherever Yankee monopoly is strongest and oligarchies most brutal in repressing the people, the revolutionary explosion of the people becomes inevitable..... The cardinal idea has been adopted by the Venezuelan revolutionary forces as follows: The armed struggle does not exclude but presupposes the utilization of all other forms of struggle; the armed struggle is a unitary work in which all forces of the revolutionary front should participate; the armed struggle is a work of the masses.....

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During the second phase of violence, the hard-line faction de-emphasized Cuban doctrines--partly because of the decline of Castro's prestige and partly to muffle the charges of enemies in and outside the party that the revolutionaries had blindly attempted to copy the Castro model. Its aim was to convince the Venezuelan public that the armed struggle was "made in Venezuela by Venezuelans" and nationalistically inspired. Communist apologists now stress the line that the PCV is fully aware of the revolutionary experience of all socialist countries and has distilled all elements adaptable to Venezuela. But the local lucha armada is presented as a special phenomenon--not a mechanical reproduction of the Soviet, Chinese, Cuban, Algerian, Vietnamese or any other revolutionary struggle.

This "philosophical approach" has recently been applied to guerrilla warfare by Alberto Lovera, the top Communist leader in charge of paramilitary operations. "I believe," he stated to party members in early 1965, "that now is the time...to transform our own experience into concrete facts.... The books of Ché and others /on guerrilla warfare/ are very good, but now is the time we develop our own doctrines from our own experience."

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The PCV and the Sino-Soviet Dispute

The PCV has been traditionally loyal to Moscow and subservient to its dictates on international policies and issues. Prior to the Sino-Soviet dispute, the party is not known to have balked at any directive issuing from the CPSU and it has followed faithfully Soviet propaganda guidelines on world affairs. Most senior leaders of the PCV have received their formal training and political indoctrination in the USSR. Many are indebted to the CPSU for travel, scholarships for their children, medical care, and other types of Communist fringe benefits. Until Castro came to power, the party looked almost exclusively to Moscow for ideological guidance and tangible support in various forms.

Although Castro and the Sino-Soviet dispute have at least temporarily upset the foreign orientation of both the "heart" and the "stomach" of the PCV, the party's international roots are still in Moscow. Both the hard and soft-line factions have sought Moscow's favor as the armed struggle has run its course in Venezuela; and the hard-liners have made concerted efforts to couch the PCV's "neutral" stand in the Sino-Soviet dispute in terms palatable to the CPSU.

As noted previously, the CPSU has probably been concerned that other free world parties, particularly those in the Western Hemisphere, have viewed the PCV's "neutralism" and program of armed struggle as an embrace in fact of Chinese "sectarianism." The Chinese themselves apparently interpret PCV neutrality as favorable to their position, and it has been. On the surface, at least, the PCV seems to have been applying much of the Chinese doctrine in practice; and some of the PCV's rationale for its program approaches the Chinese view that peaceful coexistence threatens the revolutionary spirit of Communists in underdeveloped areas dominated by "colonialism." Chinese satisfaction with the trend of events in Venezuela was indicated by the statement of an official of the New China News Agency in 1963, ranking the PCV as the only party in Latin America on the Chinese side of the fence.

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The influence of Cuba on the PCV is again reflected in its neutral position in the dispute. Although the party found comforting support in the independent lines of the Italians and Rumanians, it basically leaned on Cuban theories and held tight to Cuban coattails to avoid isolation in the hemisphere. Whether the PCV would have stood up alone for neutralism without Cuban company is a moot question.

The PCV expanded the rationale of armed struggle--aimed primarily for domestic consumption--into a more comprehensive apology for its neutralism in the Sino-Soviet controversy. The position was based largely on such irrefutable sources as the Second Declaration of Havana in February 1962, the 1960 Declaration of Moscow, and even a few quotations from Khrushchev. The party cited these materials to uphold the equality and autonomy of Communist parties and the right of each one to be the interpreter of local conditions and arbiter of the proper path to socialism within its sphere. Within these major points, the PCV sporadically expressed concern over the disunity within the international Communist family, the hope that all difficulties would be settled amicably through discussion, and the conviction that any action which aggravated points of difference between Moscow and Peking should be avoided at all cost.

The PCV's rationale appears for the most part pro-Soviet in terminology but also reflects resentment of pressures applied on the party after 1963. The Venezuelan Communists, [redacted]

[redacted] had preferred to follow the via pacifica and thus avoid at all cost the unnecessary shedding of blood of the working class. But the party found that the Betancourt regime had "closed every door to peaceful struggle," and consequently the people's vanguard was forced into the national liberation by the brutal counterrevolution of the imperialist-backed oligarchy. In accordance with the 1960 Declaration of Moscow, the Third PCV Congress, and similar infallible sources, which set forth the doctrine of equality of all Communist parties, revolutionary wars against imperialism are "not only tolerable but inevitable."

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25X1 The PCV further asserted that its own national liberation and other anti-imperialist armed struggles in no way rejected the priority objective of avoiding a third world war. Moreover, the central committee of the PCV insisted that "peaceful coexistence does not imply in any way the attenuation of revolutionary struggles of peoples." Unlike the Chinese, however, the Venezuelans did not denounce the doctrine of peaceful coexistence:

It must be perfectly clear that the struggle of the colonial and semicolonial peoples for their independence and against all forms of colonialism and neocolonialism, following the path which corresponds to the concrete conditions of each country, as experience shows to this point, does not contradict the maintenance of world peace and peaceful coexistence. On the contrary, these struggles have been valuable contributions to the weakening of bellicose forces and to fortifying the peace camp. Cuba and Algiers are eloquent examples which require no additional comment.

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This is our line--not the Chinese, not the Soviet, not the Cuban; and we demand respect for it, just as we respect whatever line is adopted by any of the other parties; the Chilean, for example.

In an open letter dated September 1964 and printed in Venezuela, the politburo similarly denied a public allegation that its tactics were determined by Moscow or Peking.... "Our party is jealous of its

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demonstrated and reiterated autonomy in the elaboration of its political line."

The widening breach between Moscow and Peking after 1962 gradually forced some type of response and/or alignment upon the other Communist parties. The issue confronted the PCV with difficult choices, which posed practical dangers to the hard-line faction committed to revolution and tied in alliance with the MIR. The MIR in turn was badly split into hard and soft-line camps, thus complicating the dilemma. Under these circumstances, the PCV's endorsement of Moscow might have produced an open split within its own ranks, defection among extremist youth elements, and possibly serious repercussions within the leadership of the paramilitary forces. The factious and uncontrollable MIR hard-liners would very probably have been alienated.

The nuances of ideological positions in the Sino-Soviet controversy were apparently not understood in Communist and MIR ranks. Siding with Moscow carried the implied condemnation of local revolutions and of the hard-liner PCV faction for promoting this strategy in Venezuela. Moreover, many of the soft-liners in both the PCV and MIR by early 1964 were seeking to limit the armed struggle and were attempting to tag the hard-liners as "Maoists." Had the Sino-Soviet dispute not had a direct bearing on these domestic Communist issues, the PCV might have declared its support of Moscow with little hesitation. The question of publicly and expressly backing the Chinese and criticizing the Soviets in the dispute was not even considered.

PCV leaders attempted to restrict intraparty discussion of the Sino-Soviet dispute to the extent feasible, apparently in order to avoid misinterpretations, and reportedly ordered cessation of such discussion in party circles in early 1965.

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In its public propaganda, the PCV carefully avoided mention of the international controversy and refrained from criticizing either the CCP or the CPSU.

The period of evasion and temporizing ended after the East German Party Congress in Berlin in early 1963. At this meeting the Soviet delegates pushed through a resolution which favored their position in the dispute, and only Cuba and Venezuela, among the 17 Latin American parties represented, refused to sign. Jesus Faria, chief Venezuelan delegate, consistently pro-Soviet and an opponent of the armed struggle in his country, reportedly resisted strong Soviet pressures to adhere to the resolution--pressure which Khrushchev himself may have applied.

After the Berlin gathering, the PCV was clearly in the "neutralist" group of parties in relation to the Sino-Soviet dispute. The party is believed, however, to have dispatched high-level emissaries to Moscow on at least one occasion prior to Khrushchev's ouster to obtain a better understanding of its position.

It was about this time that Pravda published the statements of Americo Chacon, calling for a return to the mass struggle in Venezuela.

Soviet pressure apparently in part provoked the PCV to take a stand in defense of its autonomy and independence in relations with other Communist parties, a unique step in the annals of party history. In addition to Cuban support, the PCV also turned to examples of autonomous and independent leanings of other parties. For example, it translated and published verbatim in Principios, the party's theoretical

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journal, the text of the Rumanian party declaration of April 1964. The document, inter alia, criticized Chinese polemics, defended the independence and equality of each party as the just norm of inter-party relations, and insisted on nonintervention in the internal affairs of other parties. According to the Rumanian thesis, there cannot exist a "parent party" and an "offspring party." The PCV also endorsed similar autonomous doctrines of the Italian Communist Party and the ideas contained in the memorial of Palmiro Togliatti.

To mid-1965, the PCV managed to maintain its balance on the precarious tightrope created by the Sino-Soviet dispute. It had avoided an open split within its own ranks and an open break with the hard-line MIR. The decisions of the Moscow-backed Havana meeting of Latin American parties in 1964, which endorsed the Venezuelan liberation movement, had apparently been preceded by an easing of CPSU pressure on the party with reference to the Sino-Soviet dispute. Moscow had probably also loosened its purse strings to support the paramilitary operations in Venezuela. Thus the party had managed to assert its "independence" without retaliation from the CPSU and without provoking propaganda attacks from Peking. At the same time, PCV loyalties remained in Moscow, rather than shifting to Peking; and party leaders continued to demonstrate their sensitivity to Moscow's views and to seek tangible aid there.

The Outlook for the Party

The picture that emerges from this analysis of the PCV is one of a political party primarily concerned with the conquest of power on the national scene and only secondarily with ideological orthodoxy or any other consideration extending beyond Venezuela's borders. The party conflict between the rival strategies of mass struggle and armed struggle was in fact decided mainly on pragmatic grounds; but the PCV, like most political parties, was naturally anxious to avoid unnecessary alienation of any important segment of its support, and was correspondingly insistent on the ideological correctness of its course--though even in its philosophical justifications of the armed struggle the

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note of Venezuelan nationalism was evident. If during any of this period there was a really critical influence on the party from abroad, it came not from Moscow or Peking but from Havana as the emotional appeal of Castroism. And Castroism was potent not merely because it inspired the PCV leadership but because it spoke to a broad segment of Venezuelan public opinion and so conditioned the national political environment to which the PCV leadership responded.

Down to the latter half of 1965, at least, the PCV managed the difficult feat of holding itself together as a national entity, accepting all the assistance it could get from abroad, and getting itself as little involved as possible in international Communist disputes. Partly as a result of the armed struggle, its needs for foreign help were generally high, and "neutrality" in international Communist disputes provided a convenient formula both for accepting aid from any source and for trying to keep foreign disputes from splitting the Venezuelan party.

The future course of the party is impossible to predict with accuracy. The PCV has suffered grave dangers to unity within the past seven years and dissension within the party is now deeply embedded as a result of the lucha armada phase. As of mid-1965, the PCV's plans to renew emphasis on legal political activity in pursuit of a "government of democratic peace" were causing serious friction with the MIR hard-line faction. The young leaders of both the PCV and MIR are not effectively controlled by the Communist hierarchy and have tied their futures to the success of the armed struggle. The MIR has apparently conducted liaison with the pro-Chinese faction of the Colombian Communist Party, which defected in mid-1965 and established a separate organization. Thus, within the ranks of the PCV and the MIR are large factions determined to continue the armed revolution. They are the embryo of a relatively strong pro-Chinese party in Venezuela.

If Moscow and Peking become formal competitors for authority in the guidance of the world Communist movement, and if the PCV decides on gradual abandonment of the armed struggle, there is bound to be a

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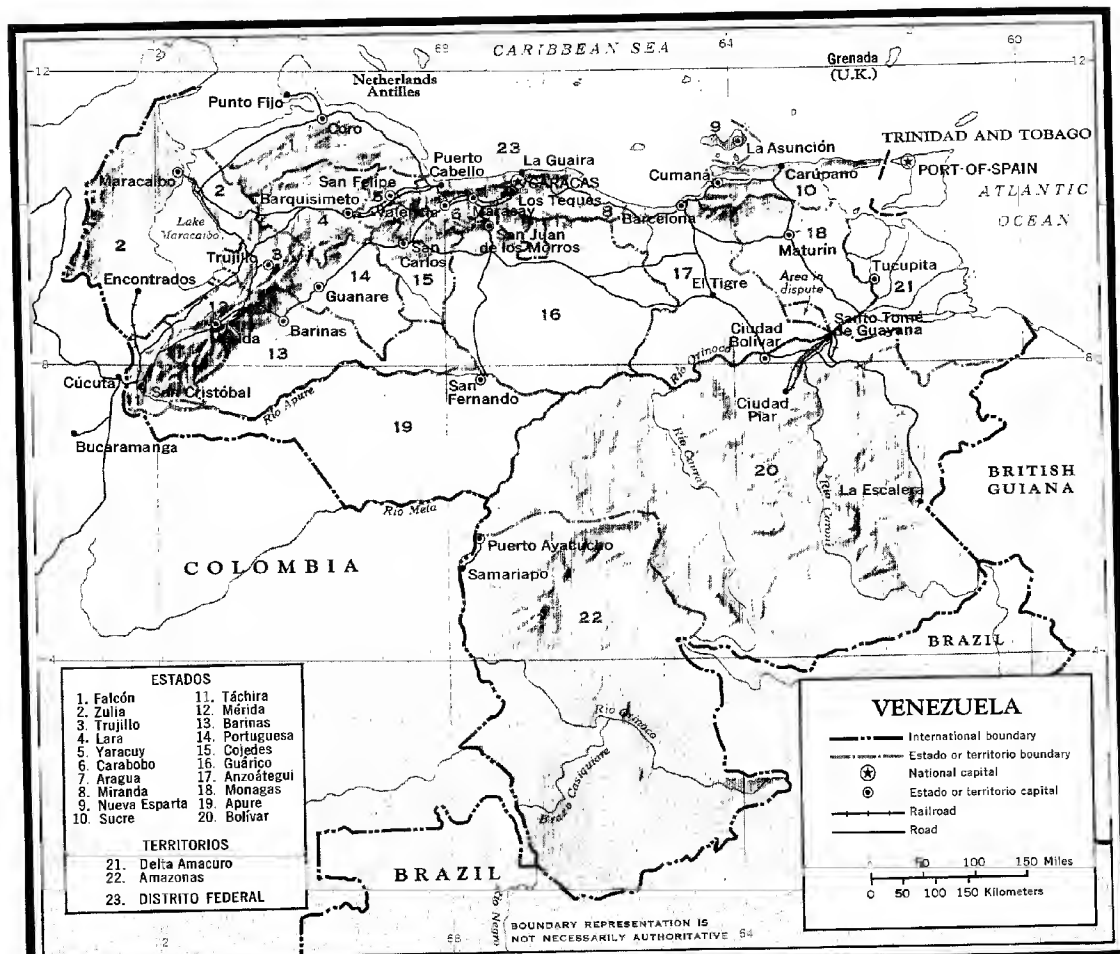
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radical reshuffling of loyalties, leaders, and members in Communist and pro-Communist parties in Venezuela. Should these eventualities materialize, Peking is not likely to wind up without an organized following in the country. In any event Moscow can probably no longer rely upon the blind and automatic obedience of the PCV when the party considers its immediate interests threatened by international Communist issues.

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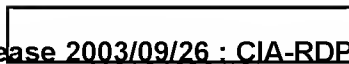
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